



in his letter of condolences to Grigoropoulos's parents, said: "His death was a wound upon the function of the rule of law. I wish (this incident) to be the last (of its kind) and I am certain that those responsible will be treated accordingly." In his letter of sympathy, Karamanlis asked the family to "accept my condolences for the unfair loss of your son...Like all Greeks, I am deeply saddened; I know that nothing can relieve your pain." Karamanlis also said that those responsible would be brought to justice and that "the state will see to it that such a tragedy does not happen again." Interior Minister Pavlopoulos told a press conference that "those responsible for the killing" would be dealt "exemplary punishment." Pavlopoulos and his deputy, former CHOD Hinofotis, offered their resignations, which the PM declined to accept.

17. (SBU) The two police officers involved in the incident were arrested on orders from Chief of Police Tsiatouras and are being held on a variety of felony counts, including premeditated murder. They were given until December 10 to prepare their statements before appearing before prosecutors. An internal investigation to ascertain the exact circumstances surrounding the two Special Guards' actions, as well as an urgent prosecutor's inquiry, were to begin "immediately."

18. (SBU) On December 8, Education Minister Stylianidis announced the closing of all schools on Tuesday, December 9, for a National Day of Mourning for Grigoropoulos. The Mayor of Athens announced the canceling of city Christmas celebrations, including the hanging of lights and decorations in squares and streets.

#### OPPOSITION FUELS ANGER

19. (C) Opposition statements have used heated language, making no pretense of assuming innocence until proven guilty for the policemen and focusing on the culpability of the government. A PASOK statement issued shortly after the initial incident stressed the grave responsibility of the police and their leadership for the incident. PASOK leader Papandreou spoke of the "arbitrary practices that increase barbarity" and stressed that Greece was living through "times of sorrow." A statement by leftist coalition SYRIZA said "a minor was murdered in the center of Athens by police forces. Without any reason, police shoot and kill young girls and boys as if the country were in a state of war. This murder is a brutal, unacceptable and inconceivable event." The Greek Communist Party (KKE), while condemning the murder of a 15-year-old boy by a police officer, also criticized the violence that had swept Greek cities.

#### EMBASSY RESPONSE

10. (SBU) U.S. facilities, thus far, have not been affected, and we are aware of no injuries to Amcits. The RSO is in close touch with the Police. On December 7, the Embassy issued an SMS message to its employees and a warden message to the American community to caution against traveling into the areas affected by the rioting. On December 8, the Embassy held an EAC meeting to discuss further actions in light of the student holiday on Tuesday and a general transportation strike that had been planned for Wednesday before the recent events (SEPTTEL). The funeral for Grigoropoulos is planned for Tuesday in the neighborhood of Paleo Psychiko where many Embassy families reside. In Thessaloniki, rioters damaged the car of an FSN who had come to the Consulate to observe events.

#### COMMENT

11. (C) The events of the last few days come at what was already a difficult time for the Karamanlis government, faced with the ongoing Vatopaedion scandal and the severe economic downturn. With polls showing main opposition PASOK already ahead of Karamanlis's New Democracy by as much as 5.5

percentage points, the riots could further fuel voter dissatisfaction. The Karamanlis government thus far has focused on placating the angry left by promising swift and severe punishment for the police officers involved in the incident. Such statements have done little to appease the anarchists, however, and run the risk of weakening the will of the police, who feel vulnerable in using any force in the face of the rioting without the support of the government.

12. (C) Greek observers see the current riots as an extreme expression of the "civil war" that has been waged over the last 30 years between the police and self-styled "anarchists." Against the legacy of the Junta and a post-war tradition of persecuting the Left, political parties have been ambivalent toward any enforcement proposal aimed to suppress Greece's anarchists, who tend to congregate in Exarchia. In circumstances similar to those surrounding the Grigoropoulos shooting, the 1985 death of another teenager, Michalis Kaltezas, who was shot and killed while torching a police bus with officers inside, resulted in months of street violence between police and anarchist rioters. But unlike 1985, the anarchists have expanded their circle of targets to include not only businesses, police, and government buildings but also residential locations. The anarchists are also exploiting new technology, such as SMS and Websites, to communicate and mobilize supporters, and thus far, the GOG has had only limited success meeting this new challenge with its more traditional approach. Two days after the shooting incident, the atmosphere in Athens remains tense with experienced observers uncertain when the pressure behind the on-going demonstrations and violence will abate.

SPECKHARD